The Comanches

854 right or wrong, as we understand them, the Comanches knew little or nothing. The approach to life was pragmatic. The child was not coaxed toward good with the hope of Heaven as a reward or frightened from evil by the fear of Hell as a punishment. Instead, he was shown by word and example that the respect and approbation of his fellow tribesmen were to be desired, and their condemnation and contempt were to be dreaded and avoided. He saw that the men who were brave and generous were applauded and respected. In Comanche
854 society it was impossible to live a secluded life. The members were
626 aware of the conduct of each person. Each was eager for the approval of his fellows and greedy for their praise, and public opinion promised the reward he hoped for and threatened the punishment he feared—lack of esteem among The People. This was their method of control.

●861 The Comanches did not whip or otherwise bodily punish their children but directed them by persuasion and object lessons. However, they were, at times, frightened by threats. Breaks Something, when a small boy, annoyed his mother by whining for some mush she was making. She called in an elder classificatory sister, who simply dragged him into the tipi with a rawhide strap around his neck and threatened to hang him to the top of the tipi if he was not good. "I was really scared."

Discipline within the family usually devolved on an older sister—real or, preferably, putative—and youngsters really resented their bossiness. The Comanches knew nothing about Freud and his theory of the Oedipus complex, but they did know that parental dominance breeds resentment, and so, like most American Indians, when forceful discipline was called for, they turned the job over to a relative outside of the immediate conjugal family or to an imaginary bogeyman.

Old people covered their heads with a sheet to give a ghost scare to bad little boys and girls, and all youngsters had the fear put into them of *piamɜmpits*, Big Cannibal Owl, the mythological creature who lived in a cave on the south side of the Wichita Mountains and ate bad children at night.

857 As soon as she was large enough to walk, the girl followed her mother everywhere about the camp. She imitated her in all things,

9: Gladwin E-5 (1940) 1948 NO6 Comanche NO6

had the right to give his sister, often against her will, to any acquaintance who gave him presents of arrows or a horse or two. A male cousin also seems to have had this right in some cases.

After the age of ten or so, brothers and sisters were supposed to avoid each other's company to a certain extent, especially if they should be left alone, and could never undress in each other's company, even if they lived in the same tipi. At the age of fifteen, boys might have a separate hut of hide-covered branches or even their own tipi in which to sleep and entertain any lady-friends they might have.[10] Brothers and sisters should not joke with each other, nor mention anything to do with relations between the sexes.

Behavior between more distantly related siblings seems to depend on how well they know and like each other and, of course, on how much they see of one another. As noted before, however, the brother-sister restrictions seem to remain in force almost indefinitely.

Parent-Child. Parents do not seem to have been unusually fond of children, especially in the old days when they were a considerable nuisance to be transported about, and guarded from danger. Discipline was largely in the hands of older siblings, as noted above, when there were any. Instruction of the girls was often taken on by the maternal grandmother, who frequently lived with the family, and the maternal uncle and older brothers taught the boys. Their father was apt to be out on the warpath, especially when they were young, and their mother was busy with the housework—cooking, making clothes, and so on.

As the children grew up, there seems to have been a gradual change in the attitude of the parents toward them. Younger children in a family, or of several families living nearby, formed a somewhat undifferentiated group; they were not mistreated, nor even seriously neglected by their parents, but were only rarely singled out for personal attention. Then, when they achieved the age of ten or so, they began to emerge as definite personalities impinging on the adult world; the father would begin to coach his son in the art of war, and the girl's mother would initiate her daughter more seriously in the housework.

Each parent usually had a favorite among the children, frequently the oldest, though a woman might spoil her youngest daughter if she realized she was to be her last. This child would receive more attention, presents, etc., than the others, who were often quite jealous. However the hostility they could express was limited, because the parent would usually side with the favorite if any squabbles occurred. Somewhat distinct from this is the quite institutionalized favorite-child pattern, found commonly in Plains societies; the Comanche themselves seem to recognize the distinction. In wealthy families, small gifts given by poorer people to the favorite child carried with them an obliga-

[10] This was done primarily to avoid harming the boys' power through contamination from the family cooking and food. Linton, personal communication.